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Cloak, dagger 'last resort'

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CRAWFORDSVILLE — The CIA has entered an "exciting" era where clandestine cloak-and-dagger spy methods are used as last resorts and American opinion is sought to achieve a "balanced" intelligence operation.

That was the message CIA chief Adm. Stansfield Turner brought to a packed audience at Wabash College here Friday night.

Security was tight, with several plainclothes policemen stationed at auditorium doors, as Turner discussed controls placed on the spy agency and its covert activities.

THE SPY CHIEF also said a strict presidential order prohibits intelligence members from "plotting or conducting assassinations." CIA operatives played no role in the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy, he said.

And currently, the CIA has no "paid, contractual relationships" with newsmen for spying activities, as alleged by a recent article in Rolling Stone magazine.

On the topic of "clandestine" activities, Turner said intelligence officials turn to undercover methods as an "avenue of last resort."

"We turn to it when we know the information sought is not available by using open sources or less risky means."

For example, in working in a country such as the U.S., where an "open society" exists, "any outsider can get a good idea of the general direction a country is to go.

"The reverse is not true when it comes to closed societies behind the Iron Curtain ... sometimes the clandestine way of intelligence is the only way we can do it." The government controls placed on the spy agency, said Turner, resulted from the CIA's alleged drug experiments, dirty tricks and domestic spying.

"THE PRESIDENT and vice president take an intense and complete interest in what goes on in the intelligence world," he said. A congressional "oversight committee checks on what we are doing and asks about our activities," added Turner. And a three-member Intelligence Oversight Board closely scrutinizes and reports to the president on all intelligence programs.

In addition, any covert action (programs aimed at influencing attitudes and events in foreign countries) must be approved by the National Security Council, the president and other panels before plans can be enacted.

"The controls are to insure that activities do

not go on by themselves, or in ways leaders of the American government do not desire," explained Turner.

"I sincerely believe and am confident that we are conducting intelligence operations ... in ways that will strengthen your American society," he added.

IN A PRESS conference prior to the lecture, Turner touched on the following points:

—The case of former CIA director Richard Helms serves "as a reminder ... that none of us or any government servants are above the law or authorized to break it." Helms pleaded "no contest" to charges he lied to a Senate committee about CIA covert operations in Chile. The "no contest" plea, added Turner, spared the revelation of "highly classified information" that would have been disclosed if Helms had gone to a public jury trial.

—The CIA, despite the revelations of alleged drug experimentation and charges of domestic spying, is in "good health." Turner said his chief goal is to bring all American intelligence agencies to "work together ... to mesh together..."

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Tennis, anyone?

CIA Director Stansfield Turner answers questions at a press conference at De Pauw University in Greencastle Friday following his first speech at a college campus since his appointment in March. Turner changed into tennis clothes after his speech for a quick match following the press session. Then he left to deliver a speech at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, where he downplayed the cloak-and dagger aspects of his job and said the CIA is kept in check by congressional watchdog agencies. (Story on Page A-3. (AP Laser-photo))